

A
SERMON

Preach'd before the Right Honourable

Sir ROBERT CLAYTON

Lord Mayor.

OF

LONDON,

AT

GUILD-HALL - Chappel,

December 7. 1679.

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The Right Honourable

Sir ROBERT CLAYTON,
Lord Mayor of London.

Right Honourable:

I*T is maliciously observ'd by a late pretender to History, that London has a great Belly, but no Taste: whereas its Refinement is of such Eminency, and its Judgment so accurate as well in Religious as Civil Concerns, that it must be held for no ordinary atchievement to be Master of any Discourse that may rise up equal to its Approbation, and strike gratefully on its palate: And I am persuaded, that no man who enters on this Stage, will ever find any just occasion to fear, lest too much Learning should make him a Barbarian to his Auditory. How this*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

present Sermon, *in the general, has been received*, I ought not to acquaint the world; 'tis a sufficient recommendation, that it has been acceptable to your Lordships better Judgment, and has made the Author unexpectedly known to your Favour: For whilst I paid my Reverence to your Dignity, I found a Friendship from your Person. My Lord, I esteem it an extraordinary Felicity, that my first Obligations are so well plac'd, that it may be said hereafter, that I Lived under your Consulship, and that all my future Gratitude may henceforth run in one Channel. My Lord, I can scarce refrain from publishing very great things of your Honour, but that I think this is no fit Paper wherein to attempt your Character; and besides, your Lordships real Worth would go near to spoil the best Oration: for solid Virtue, like a natural Rock, has always something massy, and bravely rough, which the best polish-
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The Epistle Dedicatory.

ings of Art would but deform : Some counterfeit, or imperfect Virtues, might receive a strange Advantage from Invention and Language ; such might do well in Landskip, to be viewed at a Distance ; but a true Eminency is better shew'd, than describ'd.

Perhaps I am come abroad in a false Season, where the best prospect which can be taken is terminated in a sullen cloud of doubtful affairs ; however, this is no discouragement in the least ; for altho a large measure of Political Divination may be requisite to make a man cunning, yet a small foresight will serve to make him honest : And every one may rationally presume, that he, who without any worldly Interest, loves and clings to a persecuted Church, loves it as a Church ; it being easie to distinguish a person of Naked Valour, and an unbenefic'd Affection, from such, who grow resolute onely from a Confidence in their Armour ; or who (like
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The Epistle Dedicatory.

the Tragedian, that lamented the ruine of this Country over the dead Bones and Coffin of his Son) cast an earnest and private eye on their dear Preferences, and then are Nationally afflicted. I never found my Pen more ungovernable, or a greater Temptation to write on, than at present. But lest the Epistle Dedicatory (as it usually happens) should prove the strongest Prejudice against the ensuing Discourse, I shall beg leave to subscribe myself,

Right Honourable,

Your Lordship's
most obedient Servant,

Thomas Mannyngham.

PSAL.

PSAL. 119. v. 67.

*Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now
have I kept thy word.*



THE Lot or Distribution of Afflictions, especially on the Good and Wise, which by many of the Heathens was urged as a grand argument against Providence, and which serv'd to countenance either their total denial of it, or their Murmurs against it, is now amongst us Christians made the great conformation, as of its Existence, so of its Justice and Goodness too; since our Holy Gospel has assur'd us, that suffering for righteousness sake Martyrdom, & the scandal of the Cross, are promis'd and *graciously appointed for the privilege, triumph, and glory of the Heroical Christian. And albeit those severer blessings, which were so proper for the Infancy of the Church, requiring a most strict Discipline, and glorious Ex-
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* Phil. 1.

29.

amples for a standing *Rule* and *Encouragement* to *Posterity*; and which were so remarkably verify'd in the immediate persecutions of the *Apostles*, and the succeeding *Centuries* of *Martyrs*: I say, albeit those more *rigorous mercies* seem'd now to have *expir'd* in these our days, since our *Emperours* are become *Christian*, and our *Kings* *nursing Fathers*; since *Credit* and *Security* are the *ornament* and *guard* of *Piety*, *Affluence* and *Honours* the *National* rewards of *Virtue* and *Religion*; yet notwithstanding all these *smooth Appearances*, these hopes and flatteries of a new *Paradise*, and a *Triumphant Church*, the *Gospel* must be fulfill'd; and * whosoever beareth not his *Cross*, cannot be a *true Disciple*, a *true follower* of *Christ*; but every person who has enter'd himself into the *Covenant* of *sufferings*, must with all humble resignation wait, and with patience undergo his * *predestination* to *Afflictions*.

~ Luke 14.
27.

* Rom. 8.
29.

Now the *reason* and *justice* of this proceeding with *wise* and *virtuous* men, has continually tortur'd the enquiries of the *Learned* through all *times* and *Sects*, although with very different *events*; rendring the *Epicure-*
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*an careless and independant on Providence, the Stoic sententious and witty, but the true Christian wise and humble, who considers that the best man on earth is still a grievous sinner, and highly deserving the severest Temporal Afflictions; that according to the Law of rational nature, the wicked are in a great measure, without the immediate interposals of Omnipotence, permitted the freedom of their wills, a dominion over their ordinary actions, and consequently the molestation of others; who, with a pious confidence, expects a mighty recompence in the next world, at the revelation of righteous judgment; who glories to follow the * Captain of his Salvation, made perfect and consecrated through sufferings; and rejoices with St. Paul to compleat and * fill up in his flesh the remainders and relicks of Christs sufferings; as if every Christian were to be in some measure even crucify'd for himself.*

These are some of those most powerful considerations which may sufficiently evince the justice and the necessity of our Afflictions; but the Royal Psalmist in my Text presents us with a further argument, even of their

goodness too, in relation to those manifold *advantages* which they bring to *Religion*. And that,

I. As they respect every *Individual*, and may be called *Personal Afflictions*.

II. As they respect a *Church* and *Nation*, and may be called *Publick Calamities*.

And first, as they respect every *Individual*, either the *Wicked* or the *Righteous*; being often found the *best expedients* to convert the *one* from their *vicious Habits*, to confirm and improve the *other* in their *course of Piety*.

And first, *Afflictions* are often found the *best Expedients* to convert the *wicked* from their *vicious Habits*.

* Porphy-
rius in vita
Pythag.

It is reported of **Pythagoras*, that he could tame *wild beasts* with the *Morality* of his *presence*, and suspend their *natural horror* with a *Precept*: but the commanding part of the world has long since lost this *secret* of *Restraint*, even in more proportionate objects: every *bold sinner* is become more *Magical* in his constitution, than that *hardned German Sennertus* writes of; his *obstinacy* has steel'd his very infirmities into *Armour*; so that the sharpest *reproofs* men dart at him, either re-
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flect, or drop short, like a *charm'd Bullet* : if their *Invectives* are poignant and severe, he sets himself on his guard, and holds those sins the *closer* about him, with which he is *cover'd* as with a *garment* ; if their *insinuations* are gentle, milde, and beseeching, they fall like the *Dew* on the *Rocks*, which onely serves to nourish those *Serpents* that inhabit them ; for he makes their *indearments* but *forms* to offer up his *Lusts* in, and gathers *Courtship* from their *phrase* : Grant that he hears them * *gladly* for the *newness* of their *Topic*, or becomes * *almost* a Christian by the *terror* of their *Eloquence* ; yet will his next *disorder* so scatter those discourses, that they usually prove no more beneficial to him, than the quick moments of *Lightning* to a Traveller in the night, who before he advances one step forward, has lost his *direction*, and is onely more *amazedly* relaps'd into his former *darkness*.

And how can it *naturally* be otherwise, when the whole system of his *thoughts* and *inclinations*, the great bent of his *nature* stands *contradictory* to Religion ? how can *perswasions* work on a *petrify'd heart*, or the * *foolish-* *ness* * 1 Cor. 1. 21.

* Mark 6.

20.

* Acts 26.

28.

ness of preaching reform the *chayr* of the scornful ? his daily *voluptuousness* corrupts his natural *Conscience*, extinguishes his *first Principles*, and afterwards draws a *thick veil* before his *understanding* : for whilst his *eyes* are caress'd with the visits and interviews of *beauty* and *dress*, his *Tympanum* dancing to the soft *Vibrations*, the delicate *Modulations* of *Harmony* ; whilst his *Tongue* and *Palate*, with their exquisite *Membranes*, lye bath'd in all the variety of *Luxury*, and a studied *Epicurism* ; his *Smell* incens'd with the costly sacrifice of *Odours*, every return of breath bringing with it the *Treasures* of *Arabia*:whilst, I say, the *busie Machin* is in this Tumult of *sensual Extasie*, this Tyranny of delight, how desert, how neglected must the *Cells* of *Reason* lye ? In this Riot of the Senses, how shall he attend to the *still voice* of *Judgment* and *Conscience* ? Or how shall he perceive the little *spiritual appulses* of *reflective* thoughts ?

Such *Methods* are for the *Ingenuous* and the Tractable, the humble and the relenting Sinner ; but when either the powers of the Soul lye dissolved in *Prosperity*, or *Contumacy* has skinn'd the Tumour , then can no other
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discipline prove effectual, than that which *sacrifices* unto health, that which *stabs* the Imposthume. Accordingly the Royal Psalmist having seriously considered the *blasphemies* of the wicked, intreats the Lord to take their *Reformation* into his *own hands*, to arise with sudden vengeance, and * *maintain his own* ^{* Psal. 74. 23.} *cause*. An eminent example of this *proceeding*, we may read in the *Conversion* of St. Paul, *Acts* the 9th, who whilst he was raging throughout all the *Synagogues* of *Damascus*, and *breathing out slaughters* against the Disciples of our Lord, was *struck down* into an *Apostle* by a voice from Heaven; had his *malice* purged away, by the *Lightning* that shone round him; and from his *blindness*, recover'd a most glorious *Illumination*: for as soon as his *scales* had dropt from his eyes, he from thenceforth beheld nothing but *Christ* and him *crucified*.

And although we cannot promise that the Lord will appear to every *desperate sinner* in such a *Miracle*, such a *mercy* of *consuming fire*; yet doubtless before the *full measure* of their iniquity is *completed*, there are never wanting to the wicked some such *seasons* of
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* Matth.
25. 45.

Afflictions , as may create in them *serious thoughts*, and furnish their mindes with a *true judgment* of things ; and they are never permitted to * *sleep on* till the whole *Agony* of *Divine goodness* is over.

How conspicuous was this *method* in the *Antient Excommunications* ? when the sinners were not onely excluded from the *Service* and *Sacraments* of the Church, but were delivered over to the *buffetings of Satan* , to sicknesses and torments of Minde, to terrifying *Dreams* and horrid *Illusions* : These were the *severities* that reduced them to a *captivity of thought*, to poverty of spirit , to their *whole years* of *prostration*, and to the humbling of themselves through all the *degrees of Penance*.

The *obstinate* and the *sensual* must have the *Law* again delivered to them in *darkness*, *Clouds*, and *dreadful Thunders* ; and when the *terrors* of the Lord shall have *open'd* their ears to *discipline* , and set *scurges* over their hearts , then may the *standing Ministry* take effect, and the *arts of perswasion* enter ; for so we have read of a *deaf* person, who as easily perceived the least *whisper* of a voice whilst a *drum* has beaten at his ear.

That

That * *rich man* in the Gospel (as we * Luke
 may probably guess from his *delicious fare*)^{16. 19.}
 scarce ever once *thought of Heaven*, till he
 lifted up his eyes in *Hell*; whereas if he had
 received but a *small portion* of those *Torments*
 in his *life-time*, he might from hence have
 taken a *surer prospect* of *Heaven*, through a
less Chasm, and have discovered a place for
 himself in *Abraham's bosom*.

Those young *Courtiers* of *Abdera*, who went
 distracted from the *Andromeda* of *Euripides*,
 ran raving about the Town a *whole Summer*,
 Acting and Reciting in every corner of the
 Streets, with all the *Rabies* of the Play in
 their Mouths; and notwithstanding there
 were made several applications for their *Re-*
covery, continued on their *frantick Follity*,
 till the following *Winter* starved their Poetick
 Fury, and cool'd them into *Common Sense*.

A Bed of *Sickness* may reform that man,
 whom the *Law*, the *Prophets*, the *Gospel*, nay,
 and *one risen from the dead*, would never have
 reclaimed: for, when having danced through
 various Scenes of *false pleasure* and *wild mirth*,
 and drawing near to the *last Act* of that
Fable, Life, his *distemper* shall then chance to
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give him the *dreaded leisure* of his *thoughts*, how quickly will the *Gospel* break in upon his *retirement*, and set all its *contempts*, all its *prophanations* in array before him? how will his *Objections* against *Revelation* * then melt away, like the *Canaanites* before *Joshua*; and his strong *Scepticism* grow sickly, and consume at the victorious appearance of *Truth*? how different will his *Imaginations* then be, from those that were the entertainment of his *hotter bravery*, when his *Constitution* was *Athletick*, and his blood in all its boast and pride; when his *vital Sulphur* was strong, and his *Pulse* beat high within him; when in his prosperity he said, That *Vertue* was a path too narrow for the *Generous*, onely a beaten way for the loaded *Ass*; that *deliberation* was the *cowardice* of thought, *Vice* the *exuberancy* of Parts, and *Piety* the *wisdom* of the *Spleen*? But lo, now the long-resisted notion of a *Deity* breaks out and *kindles* upon him, it even *haunts* and persecutes his reflections; 'tis about his paths and about his bed, and spies out all his ways: If his thoughts can * ascend into *Heaven*, it is there; if they go down into *Hell*, it is there also; if they take the

* Exod.
15. 15.

* Psal. 139.
v. 8, 9, &c.

the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the *Sea*, even there they shall perceive the terrible works of the Lord, and his Wonders in the Deep ; if peradventure *darkness* covers him, yet behold, the Lord comes riding on that Cloud, and then even that darkness will be day : now will his long-abused *Soul* grow Conscious of her own *Immortality*, and his *Minde* swell with inward *Argument* ; 'twill be no more accounted a *vapour in the nostrils*, or a little *spark* in the moving of the heart, but an eternal subject of *Glory* or *Confusion* : now let him tell me, if he can, how ravishing the *Psalms* of *David* are, beyond the *Odes* of *Pindar*, or the *Lunacy* of *Lucretius* ; how venerable a plain *Homily* appears, how full of *Sacred Apothegm*, how each Paragraph contains somewhat *Infinite* and *Immense*, and a *Canaan* distils from every *Text* !

Wherefore if now, even in *this his day*, he will be obedient to the vast infusions of his *Conversion* ; if he will constantly maintain the great Current of *Repentance* in its proper Channel, and with all *Sincerity* live up to the *words of his Sickness* ; then may he

be advanced into my *Second part*, and be numbred amongst the *Righteous*, where *Afflictions* are sure to meet him again, though with *another face*; for as they are often found the *best expedients* to convert the *obstinate* from their *vicious habits*: So,

Secondly, They do *confirm* and heighten the *Righteous* in their *course of Piety*.

He that considers the *slow progress* of *verminous Habits*, the constant solicitations of the *World* without him, the continual Treacheries of his *own Nature* within, the secret and malicious Insinuations of all the *Powers of Darknes* that are round him, will readily confess, That the frequent and most instant admonishments of *Afflictions*, are the best *Guards* against Vice, the surest strong Hold against all those *Enemies*; and that the *Implacable Canaanite* onely defends that Land, that *Israel* against which he fights.

We finde this state of *Afflictions* almost every where recommended by the *wiser Heathens*; which did not proceed from any *Ostentation of Wit*, was not any Rant of *Stoicism*, but the result and sobriety of their *best Reasoning*; and sprang from the cooler Coun-

Counfels of *Philosophy*; consonant to which, we meet with a most remarkable sentence of *Plato*, in his * *Republicks*, whereby you would imagine that he *prophetically* describ'd one of our *Primitive Martyrs*; where he says, *That to approve a man heartily righteous, he must be scourged, tortured, bound, have both his eyes burnt out; and in the close, having suffered all evils, must be Impal'd or Crucify'd.*

* Plat. 2.

Repub.

O Divina

Mort. 17. 18. 19.

&c.

Neither was it the *affectation* of the retir'd, or a melancholy Doctrine of the Cell, but grew a Maxime even amidst the *softnesses* of Courts, and gained the Suffrage of the Noble too: Let one instance out of many suffice, and that of *Philip King of Macedon*, concerning whom prophane History relates, that having in one day succeeded in three notable Enterprizes, he immediately implored the gods, that they would be so propitious to him, as to *expiate* that immoderate prosperity with some *misfortune*, and temper it into a draught fit for Mortality.

Moreover, what is more remarkable, 'twas chiefly from *this State*, that most of their eminent *Heroes* were Canoniz'd; for after they had been broken and dissipated here on earth

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by vast *Calamities*, then were they plac'd amongst the *Stars*, and their mighty Souls collected into their assigned Orbs.

Even the antient *Patriarchs* (who lived before the *Mosaic Institution*) passed away their numerous years in *Sorrows* and *Pilgrimages*, mighty *Judgments*, or *Egyptian slavery*: And about those times (according to the best conjectures of Ecclesiastical Authors) the righteous *Job* flourished in his *Afflictions*, and now remains to all posterity, a stupendious example of Religion and Misery.

Besides, in the establish'd œconomy of the *Jewish State* (which though it was so full and pregnant of the happiness of *this world*, that its *Political appearance* was nothing but the promise of a Temporal prosperity) yet we finde, that for the most part, amongst the *Jews*, their stoutest Leaders, best *Kings*, and noblest *Prophets*, were most severely treated with *Crosses* and sharp *Afflictions*.

And now, if the constancy, equanimity, and all the gallant worth of the best of *Heathens*, the Righteousness of the antient *Patriarchs*, the Valour, Wisdom, and Integrity of the most renowned *Jews*, have been
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signaliz'd and made conspicuous chiefly by their *Afflictions*; surely *Christianity*, which has plac'd *Immortality* in a fuller light, which has set an *exceeding glory* before us to animate our *Contentions* in *Tribulation*, and has given us an infallible assurance of that astonishment of Men and Angels, a *Crucify'd God*; ought in all natural reason to be productive of infinitely more *illustrious effects* under its *severer dispensation*: especially if we consider, that there is not a *Vertue* proposed to our *Imitation* through the *whole life of our Saviour*, which has not for its appendage that which the Animal man calls *Misery*, although it proves, in the event, the onely winging of the Soul, the highest *exaltation* of *Humane Nature*, which had never been honoured with the *Union of God*, if it had not been in order to *suffer*.

But yet *Christianity* would be a strange *irrational Doctrine*, and as eagerly derided as the *Stoical Apathy*, if from its *Principles* and *Duties* we should endeavour to persuade men that in *Afflictions* and *Miseries* there was a *sensitive pleasure*, or at least no sensitive regret: *Virtue* and *Piety* do not charm us in-

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to a *Lethargy*, do not lessen the Impressions of *Pain*, or the resentments of *Injuries*; they rather improve them, by how much the *Temperate* and the *Intellectual* are more *keen* and exquisite in all their *perceptions*, than the *Sensual* and *Debauched*; so that the true Christian is altogether as sensible and as conscious of the *Wounds* and *Indignities* offered to his Nature, as the *Voluptuous* and the *Revengeful*; but he bears them with an entire submission to the *Providence*, *Correction*, or *Trial* of his Heavenly Father, not onely

* 2 Cor. 7.
4. without Murmurings, but with Joy, * exceeding Joy, by reason of that *Prospect* that is still before him; a *Prospect*, which shews the *duration* of his Misery short and vanishing, the *Recompence* of it immeasurably great and Eternal. This was St. Paul's comfort in the

* 2 Cor.
11. midst of his * *perils*, *fightings*, and *jeopardies*; of his *stripes*, *prisons*, and *deaths*: when he was a *Gladiator* in the world in the behalf of

* 1 Cor. 4.
9. Christ, a *Spectacle* and * *Theatre* to Men and Angels. Even our blessed Saviour himself was pleased to sustain his *suffering Humanity* with the full Confidence and Ex-

* Heb. 12.
2. pectation of the * *Joy* that was set before him;

him ; for then he *despised the shame*, and *endured the Cross*, when he looked through the darkness of his Agony and Crucifixion, and beheld his * *Glorification* above Principalities * Eph. 1. and Powers, his Exaltation at the right hand ^{20, 21.} of God.

Afflictions are those *storms* that fix and strengthen our *Principles*, that settle and secure our *Fundamentals* ; that fasten our *Religion*, not on the complacencies of our *Affections* , and the accidental deliciousness of a *prosperous Piety* ; but on strong *reason*, deep consideration, and an invincible *wisdom* in *spiritual* concerns. On these *waves* are we *dashed* the nearer Heaven, till our *Hope* and our *Faith* advance into *Hypostasis* , into the * *evidence* of things not seen. These are the * Heb. 11. *two-edged swords* , the *sharpnesses* that perform the true *Anatomy* of the *Christian*, that pierce and search to the * *dividing of Soul* * Heb. 4. ^{12.} and *Spirit* , *joynts and marrow* , to the distinguishing of true *Piety* from *Temper* : for many specious acts and offices in Religion, do oftentimes proceed more from *Constitution* than *Precept* ; are not so much the certain effects of a steady *Judgment* , as the casual efforts

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efforts of a warm Imagination ; as 'tis not *strength* and *choice*, but *weakness* and *infirmity*, that makes a man *Run*, when he should *only Walk* ; whereas , *Afflictions* prove us invincibly constant to our *Resolutions* , and *pursuit* makes us cling to the *Horns* of the *Altar*.

Besides , they are *Tryals* which *Hypocrisie* can never stand ; they pluck off its *disguise*, and make it quit the *Stage* ; they shake and ruffle the man till they discover a true *vital Devotion* from a *Mechanick Impulse* ; which, like the *motion* of a Paralytick , argues not *progression*, but *disease*.

They give us an exquisite *relish* of those *Mercies* we do enjoy, wean our *Affections* from the *world*, prevent our *surfeits* of *prosperity*, and place us in a continual preparation for *Death* : Moreover, what is not so commonly insisted on, they enlarge our *Experience* , and give our *Faculties* a miraculous *perfection*. For, do but consider what *excellent discourses* are owing to the Pen of the *Mourners* ? what Divine * *Consolations* we have receiv'd from the damps and horrors of a *Prison* ? what * *constancy* and peace of mind

* Boeth.

* Lipsius.

mind from the incirclings of *War* ? What *Meditations* from a *Martyr'd King* ? as if mens *understandings* had been purg'd and refin'd by their *Afflictions*, and their *faculties* vex'd into *Intuition* : as 'tis observed of the more *Intellectual Platonists* , that by long *fastings*, and frequent *severities*, they rais'd themselves unto those *Abstractions* and pure *Idea's*, which some men are not yet *Dieted* to apprehend : whereby they did in a manner resemble those *Prophets* of old , who receiv'd their *Inspirations* , and deliver'd their *Oracles* in *Tortures*. Nay, perhaps the renowned *wisdom* of *ancient* men is not so much extracted from long *observations* and repeated *experiences*, as from the *Lectures* of their *Gout* and *Stone*, as from those *infirmities* which accompany their *Age*.

Neither do they give a *perfection* onely to mens *natural powers*, but more especially an extraordinary *advancement* and *supereminency* to their *Spiritual Capacities* ; making them * *partakers* of *Gods Holiness*. It must be ^{* Heb. 12. 10.} confess'd , that many have very *resolutely* undergone great and formidable *Torments*, even *death* it self , in its most cruel and vilest

cumstances, out of false and unworthy Principles; such as *Phanatick Obstinacy*, *National Custom*, *Secular Gallantry*, meer *Sullenness* and *Stupidity*, *blind and misguided Zeal*, and what is more remarkable, even *Jesuitical policy*: but these spurious and equivocal examples are so palpably discerned from those excellent persons who have suffer'd in the behalf of the Religion of the Gospel, with true *Christian meekness* and *patience*, that they need not in the least disturb our present argument: for had these false Martyrs that general conspiracy of *Graces*, which *Afflictions* always produce in the truly *Righteous*? did they manifest in their *demeanour* and *conversation* that fruit of the Spirit summ'd up *Gal. 5. 22. viz. love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance*? if so, they could never have been enemies to *Civil Government*; they could never have scornfully rejected the humble addresses of holy Confessours, and good men; have wilfully stifled the Evidences and convictions of *Truth*; have design'd and acted barbarities, contrary to all natural justice, moral goodness, and heathenish civility. No,
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the afflicted *righteous* man has no such *concerns* upon earth; he leads a * *life hid with* * Col. 3.3. *Christ in God*, dwells in the Contemplations of *Heaven*, is exercis'd in pious *Raptures*, and incompas'd with the Ministry of *Angels*: his earnest *Devotions* gather vigour and *accent* from the *acuteness* of his *pains*, from the *overwhelmings* of an horrible *dread*; whilst he considers and knows, that all his *persecutions* will arise into the *enlargements* of future *happiness*, and his *fiery tryals* be purify'd into a *glory* round his head.

Where would have been the *Annals* of the *Heroick*? Where would have been victories of *Faith* mention'd *Hebrews* the 11, if it had not been for *Swords*, *Tyrannies*, *wild beasts*, for the numerous inventions of persecuting *malice*? Hence have proceeded all those Miracles of *patience*, *courage*, *humility*, *resignation*; that *inspired complacency* under *Torments*, suitable to what *St. Chrysostome* Rhetorically writes of the three Children in the Furnace, *Ευθυμίας αἱ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἀπέλαυσαν*, that is, they *expatiated* there with as gay a *freedom* and relaxation of mind, as they would, had they been on the *plains* of *Mesopotomia*, or walking in the *gardens* of the *East*. No

No Joy like to that of the *Righteous* under the glory of his Tribulations: How dead and vapid are all the Blandishments of the world to him, who is exercis'd in *spiritual Agonies*, in the *Olympics* of the *Soul*? who when *Persecution* ceases, can yet obtain for himself a *Crown of Martyrdom* by strict *Abstinencies*, holy *Discipline*, and the rigours of *Mortification*? That even by *these methods* can compleatly conquer and make innocent that *Triumvirate* of *afflictions*, *Poverty*, *Disgrace*, and *Sickness*, which the world hath dress'd in such *frightful representations*.

For what relish can there be in the abundance of Riches to one, who has tasted the recollections of a *Religious Poverty*! who can be sedate and divinely busie amidst the *peevisishness* of Want, and with *Socrates* maintain a deep and *quiet Contemplation*, with a *Xantippe* at his ear? who considers, how *Poverty* is a state so *tolerable*, that it has been courted and chosen by many persons, before ever any particular Providence had pointed out the *Necessity*, or laid the *Constraint*? A state so *commendable*, that 'tis made one of the most solemn Vows of those who at any
time

time engage themselves in a *Religious Order* ; that it was always *recommended* by men who were best able to give a true judgment of things, and had dedicated their lives to Wisdom and Philosophy. But above all, that 'tis sanctifi'd and made *Evangelical*, by the *History* and *Example* of our *Blessed Saviour*, who has not spoken a much *harsher* thing in his *whole Gospel* , than what relates to a *confidence* in riches and great abundance ; allowing onely a * *bare possibility*, a possibility with *God* , *with whom all things are possible* , for the refuge and *salvation* of the wealthy : as it were, not receiving them within the *ordinary* extensions of his love and tendernefs, but referring them to the *omnipotence*, and *last reach* of his *mercy*.

* Matth.
13. 25.

What are the acclamations of *Fame* , or the obloquies of *Scorn* to him , who considers how intoxicating a *great Reputation* is, how apt to raise Tumours in the *imaginations* of the *best* of men , and to tincture their reflexions with pride and vain complacency ? who calls to mind , that there is not usually a more *precarious* thing on earth , than he who has been *nursed* up with flatteries and applauses,

plauses, who has liv'd upon *publick breath*, and been the *Idol* of the admiring *multitude*; that such an one is the *Creature* of every *Hyperbole*; that he may be transform'd and fashion'd by every *modish Epitbire*, and complemented into all the absurdities of *opinion* and *action*: who sadly reflects how the voluptuous and plausible, with *Herod* in the

* 12. 22. * *Acts*, are often panegyric'd to *Death* and *Hell*, by the officious *Blasphemies* of the *Rabble*: who considers that an abused *Reputation* does often break more *illustriously* through a *cloud of Infamy*; and let whatever happen, yet a *Blot* on his *name* here, may give it a *fairer Character* in the *sight of Angels*, and make it more *legible* in the *Book of Life*.

Lastly, it must be confess'd, that *Health* is an inestimable Blessing; that it was the chiefest of all *Temporal Promises* in the *Old Testament*, without which no *other* could have been enjoyed. But yet if we consider what *nourishment* and fewel it often administers to the *grosslest sensualities*, what dangerous *temptations* lie in the *bosome* of the *healthful* continually pressing for admission, and how greedily they are many times entertained by those

those who are *strong* to undergo the *labours* of *iniquity* ; we shall be apt to acknowledge that *sickness* is a proper *season* for the *exercise* and *acquisition* of many *graces*, or at least that 'tis a *happy impotence*, in respect of the most *wasting vices* we are subject to ; that a *firm constitution* of *mind* is often wrought from the *diseases* of the *Body* , and the *Soul* grows more *active* and *refin'd*, by still working out its *own separation* ; that the *mortal part* of us, by a continual succession of *little dissolutions*, may be better prepar'd to drop with ease, and just maturity, into that *final one* of *death* ; which , when it meets a man in the full Tyde of his *prosperity* , and the luxury of his *Temper*, with what *confusions* it assaults his *Triumphant minde*, with what *violence* it rends his strong ligaments of *Life* ? No one will more readily part with his *earthly Tabernacle*, than he that by *indispositions* and long *sicknesses* , has been taught the trouble of keeping it *Tenantable* ; he will rejoyce to sleep with his *Fathers*, to be eased of the *ruines* of *Adam*, the *dishonours* of *Original sin* , and to resigne up his *dust and ashes* for *Immortality*, and a *glorious form*.

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Thus

Thus we have seen by what *gracious* arts, strengths, and assistances, *Afflictions* may not onely be *patiently* born by the *Religions*, but also improv'd into *real comforts*, and heightened into all *natural* and *spiritual advantages*; and this may be done, not onely by persons in their *private concerns*, but also in their *relative* and *publick capacities*, and as they constitute a *Church* or *Nation*: which brings me to my *second General*, viz.

II. Briefly to consider what advantage *Afflictions* bring to *Religion*, as they respect a *Church* or *Nation*.

Those narrow Reasoners, who, measuring *Divine Providence* by the modes of *humane inspection*, thought it *trivial* and *perplexing* for it to direct every *Ordinary Agent*, and to mingle its *concourse* with *particulars*; have notwithstanding been very generous and liberal, in allowing a constant and ample superintendency over *Churches* and *Nations*: and that there might be nothing wanting to the *magnificence* of *Providence* in their Government, have super-added peculiar *Stars* and *Angels* for subordinate ministrations. What appropriate Schemes of Government
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God Almighty is pleas'd to establish to himself in his presiding over those *greater Bodies*, is no mans Province to inquire, nor within his capacity to declare; but however, this we may be certain of, and it has been confirm'd by the experience of all Ages, that *ordinarily Nations* may expect their *prosperous* or their *adverse seasons*, according as their *Virtues* or their *Vices* shall exceed.

And although *prosperity* be the Vote of Nature, the thirst and instinct of the Soul, insomuch that *Isaiah* brings in the *Jews* begging a *kind consenage* from their Prophets, * *Speak unto us smooth things, prophesie deceits*; * *Esay. c. 30*
 Torment us no longer with your *Desolations* *v. 10.*
 and *Captivities*, those prodigies of a distemper'd sleep, but let your *Dreams* be a *continued Pageantry of Heaven*, and all your *Visions* a *Shechinah*: I say, although this be the universal voice of Mankind, and that with the *Israelites*, we lust for a *Canaan* in the very *wilderness*, are calling for new *luxuries* of *mercy*, whilst we are despising the former; yet the Lord *graciously* hears our *Prayers*, and grants us a *denyal*; knowing, that in plenty and ease, we are apt to forget our

Maker; but when he *smites* us, we *turn back*, we *seek* him, we *inquire* of him; we publish *Fasts by Law*, transfer our *Policies* into *Piety*, and make the depths of *Empire* serve *Religion*: even so the appearance of a *Comet* improves *Astronomy*, better than all the ordinary motions of the *Stars* and *Planets*; and the *Sun* invites more eyes towards *Heaven* by its *Eclipse*, than by its *constant splendour*.

The certain vicissitude of *sins* and *judgments*; *mercies* and *provocations*, hath in a manner render'd all *Church-History* but *Repetition* and *Tautology*: Thus God dealt with the *ancient Jews*, thus with the *first Christians*, and so he continues to deal with us: and although we cannot without detestation and amazement recal those * *numerous ingrati- tudes* of *Israel*, committed within the space of *forty* or *fifty years*; yet if we reflect on our own *Chronicle*, within near the same circuit of time, we shall be apt to conclude the *Jews* but *puny sinners*, as the *horror* of *Regicide* seems to lessen the *guilt* of *Murder*: for did not the *memories* and obligations of our *Fathers*, immediately *cool* upon almost as great a *deliverance*, as the *Miracle* of the

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* Psal. 106.

Read-sea ? and did not we within a while af-
 ter *murmur* and *rebel* against *Moses* and *Aaron*,
 the best *Monarchy* , and the best *Hierarchy* ?
 and in that *Interregnum*, when our King was
 but gone into the *midst of the Cloud*, to learn
Afflictions , and to *commune* with the *Lord* ;
 did not some of us set up a *Calf* in *Horeb* ,
 and *worship* that *molten Image* ? when we
 were brought into the *promised Country* ,
 οὐκ ἔμελλεν γὰρ, with the *secret* , but most *power-*
ful hand of Providence , did we not run af-
 ter the *Counsels of Balac* , and commit *Whore-*
dom with the Daughters of Moab ? and has
 not the *Lord visited* for this too , with as
 great a *Plague* ? and, having now a while
 enjoyed the *lots and divisions* of our *Inheri-*
tance , are not some amongst us *erecting Al-*
tars on high places , serving *Baal* and *Ashta-*
roth , and returning to the *antient Idolatry* of
 the *Land* ? These are our *parallel provocations*
 with *Israel* , and shall not our *judgments* be
 greater ? even in this our *Land*, our *sins* are
 become our severest *Executioners* ; for do
 not *Heresie* and *Schism* , *prophaneness* and
hypocrisie , like the *four winds* in the de-
 scription of a *Tempest*, blow all together ! in-
 much,

much, that we may paint *our Church*, like the *Planetary figure*, with a *dart* in every *limb*; for its *whole body* now appears onely a *larger constellation of Wounds*.

Wherefore now is the proper and *advantageous season*, nobly to maintain the *Purity* of our *Faith*, and to defend the *wisdom* of our *Discipline*; to lay aside all peevish *Principles*, and *sullen Separations*; to *conspire* in nothing but *mutual Charity* and *publick Love*; to heighten our *Devotions* by *numbers* and *ardency*; to encompass and besiege the *mercy-seat* of Heaven with importunity and *holy violence*.

Now let our *witty Gallants* leave off their foolish *Jestings*, and irrational *Scepticism*, their *customary*, if not *malicious levity* in *Sacred* things; and with their *solid Ancestors*, grow wise and severe in their *Conversation*, faithful and friendly in their *ordinary dealings*, generous and brave in their *publick Actions*, manly and solemn in their *Religious Duties*. Let our *Magistrates* assume an *Heroical spirit*, and dare to be *righteous* where the *wicked prosper*; let them with *wisdom*, *integrity*, and *zeal*, execute Justice
and

and *Judgment* in this our Land, and then the Lord will *withdraw his*: for who can tell but that the *courageous* and *fervent Magistrate*, like * *Phinehas* amongst the *Jews*, * *Pfal. 106.*
 may even *now* remove a *National Calamity* *v. 30.*
 with his *Javelin*, with his *speedy* and *zealous* execution? Let our *Princes* be cloathed with *Sackcloth*, and for a while make their *Thrones* in the *dust*: Let our *Priests* be deck'd with *Righteousness*, *Courage*, and the *preparations* of *Martyrdom*; let them rejoyce to be made an *Anathema* for our *Church*, and to *bleſs* our *Nation* through the midst of their *flames*.

And now to sum up all our fore-going discourse as briefly as we can.

I. Let the bold and *prosperous sinner*, who after many *afflicting Calls* to Repentance, continues still to sin on with an *high hand*, let him with fear and trembling conclude, that his *Impunity* now proceeds from Gods *greatest vengeance*, and the not *Afflicting* of him any more, from the very *fury* of his *wrath* and *indignation*; as those *Arrows* flie *swiftest* which flie *invisible*; and we often *miſs* the *blow*, by the *exceſs* of anger. Let the obstinate *Atheist*, who will not be reform'd by
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present judgments, but even after melting becomes nothing but dross; that asks who the Lord is; after so many plagues of Conviction, let him know, that he wants but few degrees of being reduc'd unto the utmost Analysis of hardning, of being consummated into the constitution of the damn'd, the eternal glass of Hell-fire.

II. Let the Afflicted righteous man rejoyce; that his infirmities explore the strengths of Heaven; that by his Tryals is manifested the Victory of Faith, the omnipotence of grace. That 'tis the *business of Afflictions to create in him a due consideration, hearty contrition, strong cries, increase of reverence, and the enlargements of Piety.

* See St. Chrys.
in Rom. 8.
St. Chrys.

III. And let us of this Church and Nation consider, that as we certainly are (and without ostentation or any secular interest be it spoken) the most perfect, and the sincerest part of the Catholick Church now existent, so we trust that 'tis the particular indulgence of Almighty God to keep us up to this our refinement, by constant persecutions: to correct and abate our personal defects, but to confirm and make our Doctrines more Illustrious, by the

by the implacable oppositions of *Phanatick* rage, and *Jesuitical malice*: and if we farther reflect on that *unparallel'd wisdom*, *learning*, and *moderation*; that most rational and substantial *Piety*, *Charity*, and *Devotion*, which integrate the *constitution* of our *Church*, we shall be ready to acknowledge it highly expedient, that, with *St. Paul*, we should have a *Thorn in the flesh*, and be often under the buffetings of *Satan*, the designs and attempts of unreasonable and malicious adversaries; lest we should be exalted above measure with our super-eminency of Doctrine; lest we should be puff'd up * *τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως*, with * 2 Cor. 12. 7. our abundance of Revelation.

And let our *Enemies* now destroy our *City*, let them burn down our *Temples*; if we cannot sing *Praises* under their *Roofs*, we will *Repent* under their *Ashes*; we will meet in *Dens* and *Caves* of the *Earth*, and by those *obscurities*, those *stealths* of *Worship*, render our Religion more *Apostolical*, more *Primitive*. Yet will we set our *Moses* in the gap, to see if peradventure the *Lord* too will *Repent*, and turn away his *Displeasure* from us; to this end we will humble and

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prostrate our selves, grow *Pioneers* in *De-
votion*, and countermine them with our
Prayers; and should the *Destroying Angel* be
already come forth, should *Judgments* be
already *Commission'd* for our Ruine, yet will
we pray against *Decree*, against *Predestina-
tion* it self; and * *Lord*, if it be possible, let
this *Cup* pass from us !

* Mat. 26.
39.

FINIS.